

Title	Beginnings and development of volleyball in Greece
Authors	Adamakis, Manolis
Publication date	2018
Original Citation	Adamakis, M. (2018) 'Beginnings and development of Volleyball in Greece', in Babić, K.M.P., Živanović, N., Pavlović, P. D. and Antala, B. (Eds.), History of Volleyball in Europe, Kosovo, Serbia: University of Priština, Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Leposavić, pp. 30-50. isbn: 978-86-82329-75-6
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	http://www.fiep-serbia.net/docs/volleyball_in_europe.pdf
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Download date	2023-05-04 20:10:10
Item downloaded from	http://hdl.handle.net/10468/8910

GREECE

BEGINNINGS AND DEVELOPMENT OF VOLLEYBALL IN GREECE

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Introduction

William G. Morgan, a Youth Men's Christian Association (YMCA) physical education director, initially introduced volleyball as a sport in Holyoke, Massachusetts (USA), on 9th February 1895. Morgan, who was born in 1870 and was a former rugby player, invented volleyball during his attempt to find an indoor game suitable for leisure purposes, played by any number of players and less rough than basketball (which was catching on in the area). His initial thought was to create a sport in order to maintain rugby players' fitness levels and avoid severe injuries during season breaks. With the help of YMCA employers at Springfield College, Massachusetts, and transforming some of tennis and handball rules, he ended up in a simplified version of modern volleyball [Federation Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), 2017; Katsikadeli and Bergeles, 1986; Northern California Volleyball Association (NCVA), 2018; Shewman, 1996].

Since the first game, conducted by William G. Morgan, a net 1.83 m high and a leather ball with a rubber inner tube, which weighted approximately 250- 340 grams, were used. Each team consisted of five players and the first official exhibition match was held in 1896 at Springfield College YMCA. Volleyball, like all sports in USA, was a derivative of the of the olympic idealism movement, proposed by Pierre de Coubertin (Katsikadeli and Bergeles, 1986; Shewman, 1996).

Originally the game was called Mintonnete, a name derived from the game of badminton (2 Wikipedia). Dr. Alfred Halstead was the first to notice the volleying nature of the game (the participants were trying to keep the ball up in the air while passing it from on side of the net to the other), so after a while the game became known as volleyball (FIVB, 2017; Katsikadeli and Bergeles, 1986; NCVA, 2018; Shewman, 1996).

This newly introduced sport became extremely famous in USA and, with the International YMCA's contribution, was spread globally. The first country outside the USA to adopt volleyball was Canada in 1900, followed by Cuba (1905), Puerto Rico (1909), Philippines (1910), Uruguay (1912), China and Japan (1913). In Europe the American Expeditionary Forces introduced

volleyball to their allies during the First World War (1914-1918). France, ex Czechoslovakia, ex USSR, Italy and Poland had been initiated in volleyball before 1920. Each one of the above-mentioned countries developed their own game rules, which made necessary the foundation of an international federation in order to develop common rules for everyone (FIVB, 2018; Katsikadeli and Bergeles, 1986).

The initial, unsuccessful though, attempt toward the foundation of an international federation took place during Berlin's Olympic Games in 1936. Almost 10 years later (1947) the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB) was founded and the countries that contributed significantly to the foundation were France, ex USSR, ex Czechoslovakia and Poland. The founding FIVB members were Egypt, Belgium, Brazil, France, Italy, USA, ex Yugoslavia, Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, ex Czechoslovakia and Uruguay. Greece joined the federation in 1949. The number of FIVB members increased rapidly and by 1978 there were 145 country members (Kalaitzis, 2012; Katsikadeli and Bergeles, 1986).

The rules evolved over time. Initially, in the Philippines (1916), the skill and power of the set and spike had been introduced, and four years later the 'three hits' rule and the rule against hitting from the back row were established. In 1917, the game changed from 21 to 15 points (Volleyball, 2018). However, it was not until FIVB was established that some rules became official, due to the fact that players' physical characteristics were different between Eastern and Western countries. The lower height Asians had adapted the rules according to their characteristics and played the game with nine players in each team, without rotation, two serving attempts and in a larger court, while in Europe rotation was established since 1912 and each team consisted of six players (Katsikadeli and Bergels, 1986).

The first men's World Championship was held in Prague in 1949, with the participation of 10 countries, and the ex USSR was the winner. The first women's World Championship was held in Moscow in 1952, with the participation of 8 countries and won again by the ex USSR. The first men's European Championship was held in Rome in 1948 and won by Czechoslovakia, while the first women's European Championship was held in Rome in 1949 and the winner was the ex USSR. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) designated volleyball as an Olympic team sport, to be included in the 1964 Olympic Games and those tournaments winners were ex USSR (men) and Japan (women) (FIVB, 2018; Katsikadeli and Bergeles, 1986; NCVA, 2018).

The very beginnings of Volleyball in Greece¹

Greek volleyball was initiated by the Greek YMCA on the aegean shores of west Anatolian peninsula (Asian Turkey) in 1919. A preliminary championship was held the same year with the participation of eight teams, won by Panionios. Volleyball was then transferred to mainland Greece after the Asia Minor catastrophe during the Greco-Turkish war (1919-1922).

The first Greek volleyball coach was a physical education teacher named Athanasios Lefkaditis who lived in west Anatolian peninsula and was relocated to Greece after the war. This new-entry sport was widely accepted from its first beginnings and penetrated in many sport clubs and educational institutions in major Greek cities, such as Athens, Thessaloniki and Patra. In 1924 the first men's Athens-Piraeus Championship took place and the winner was again Panionios. This championship continued during the two following years, won by Panellinios and Ethnikos respectively. In 1926 the first women's Championship was organized in the city of Thessaloniki, with the participation of five teams: Aris, YWCA, AKOA, Iraklis and Pamakedonikos, however we are not sure which team won this tournament. The same year (1926) the best Athens and Thessaloniki volleyball players created two separate teams and competed against each other in Thessaloniki, a game organized by Iraklis team. Athens team was the winner by 2-0 sets (15-9, 15-7). A year later (1927) the first women's Athens Championship was held with the participation of Panionios, which won the championship, Panellinios and Ethnikos. Gradually more female teams were created, such as Piraikos, Near East and Patra Volleyball Club. At this point we have to acknowledge the president of Panionios, D. Dallas, who was the visionary and leader of female volleyball in Greece.

In Athens, during the interwar period (1918-1939), many teams were founded, such as Panionios, Ethnikos, Near East, Vyronas Youth, Piraikos, Ionikos and Ampelokipi just to mention some. Soon many more teams were created throughout Greece and local championships in many cities were organized. However, the most important era for volleyball was between 1936-1940, when volleyball became the most popular team sport in Greece. A more unified men's Championship was created, with more teams taking part from most major Greek cities, and the first winners were Panellinios (1936, 1937,

¹ The information provided in the following sections are based on the book: Katsikadelli, Alkinoi, and Nikos Bergeles. *Volleyball*. Athens, Greece: Kegrift E.P.E., 1986. Further data, information and photos were collected thanks to the contribution of National Volleyball Teams' Friendship Club (hellasvolley.gr), Nikos Bergeles and Thanasis Margaritis, who organized the honorary event on 21st May 2017, in order to celebrate the 50 years from the first official men's National volleyball team participation in the Mediterranean Games of Tunisia (1967).

1939, 1940) and Patra S.U. (1938). During the occupation of Greece by the Axis Powers (1940-1944) every official athletic activity and development, including volleyball, was suspended.



Figure 1. Tunisia, 1967: The first Greek national team that participated in the Mediterranean games.

1945-1951: Initial Greek teams' international competitions

After the end of Second World War, many volleyball teams were rebuilt and more new ones were established. For example, in Thessaloniki, the teams that played the most important role for volleyball's rebirth were Aris, Iraklis, PAOK and YMCA. In October 1946 the first international match of any Greek team took place. Sporting G.C., reinforced with some players from Panellinios, played a set of matches in Egypt against local teams. Five years later, on 13-15 August 1951, another Greek team (Pagkrati A.C.) visited Egypt and played three matches against local teams. Meanwhile, in 1951, Greece became an official member of FIVB.

1952-1965: Initial Greek national team's international competitions and national championships

The initial matches against foreign teams were basically played against Egyptian, Turkish, French and ex Yugoslavian clubs. This might be well understood by the fact that at that time transportation was not as easily conducted as it was during the following years. In spring of 1952 men's Greek national team played the first two international friendly matches against the French national team. The head coach of that team was Giannis Levantinos, while the players of this first national team were: Kostas Giataganas, Vasilis Eftaxias, Giorgos Karotsieris, Dionysis Anagnostopoulos, Giannis Lamprou, Dimitris Spyridonos, Nikos Lazaridis, Giannis Lazaridis and Dimitris Patras. In the team there were also the head of mission Kostas Niatas, as well as two team escorts, Giorgos Vasilakopoulos and E. Anagnostakis. In the first match, France won 3-1 sets.



Figure 2. *Paris, 1952: Greek national team that played against France.*

During 1955, many Greek teams played international matches against foreign teams, in Greece and abroad. The French team Côte de Beauté played against Panathinaikos and Panellinios, while the national team competed against the American College of Greece. In 1957, Greek national team played two exhibition matches against Romania and in 1959 competed against mixed Egyptian teams in Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt. The head coach at that time was Aristos Kanellopoulos.



Figure 3. *Cairo, 1959: Greek national team that played against Egypt.*

Two years later, in early 1961, the position of the Greek team's head coach was appointed to Savvas Grozdanovitch and, as a result, the first matches against ex Yugoslavian teams, Partizan and Jedinstvo, were held. Meanwhile, during the same year, more matches against Egyptian teams took place, both in Greece and Egypt. The two following years (1962-1963), both men's and youth's (U-23) national teams competed, again, in a couple of friendly matches against Egypt and Turkey. In 1966, the French team Racing visited Greece and played two exhibition matches, with the opponents been the teams of Panellinios and Milonas. Finally, it should be mentioned that in 1960-1961 the first Panhellenic Volleyball Championship took place in Athens and the first champion was the team of Panellinios.



Figure 4a (up right). Athens, 1961: Greek national team that played against Partizan.

Figure 4b (up left). Alexandria, 1963: Kyriakos Pantelias performs a spike.

Figure 4c (down right). Novi Sad, 1961: Andreas Bergeles attacks.

Figure 4d (down left). Belgrade, 1962: Greek national team in Belgrade.

1966-1970: Foundation of the Hellenic Volleyball Federation and initial Greek national team's participation in official competitions

The year 1966 was very important for Greek sports in general, because the Greek Sports Federation, with the participation of volleyball and basketball, was established. The first President of this newly established federation, as elected at the first general assembly, was Athanasios Mantellos, followed by three vice-presidents: Ioannis, Koutsoulentis, Georgios Pantelakis and Panagiotis Lampropoulos. By the end of 1966 a total of 129 sport associations were members of the Federation. Another important even in 1966 was the first official Balkan youth volleyball Championship, which took place in Smyrna, Turkey, in which the Greek team ranked fourth. The Greek youth team would also compete in the Balkan Championships to come and ranked first in

Romania (1969) and Athens (1971) (Armiliota, Garin and Pandoski, 2006). Also, in 1966 the first A-class national Championship was organized and teams from the major Greek cities participated, with the winner being the team of Panathinaikos. That year the first Greek women's national team was established and played two matches against Turkey in Istanbul, in which was defeated 3-0 sets in both matches.

During 1967, men's Greek national team participated for the first time in two international competitions, the Mediterranean Games (Tunis, Tunisia), and the European Championship (Turkey). In Tunis Greece would rank seventh, while in Turkey would take the 20th position. Some important players of these first attempts to participate in European competitions were Vasilis Kolokotronis, Stefanos Louloudas, Andreas Lorandos, Thanasis Margaritis, Nikos Bergeles, Kyriakos Pantelias, Ntinos Hasapis, and the head coach in both championships was Aristos Kanellopoulos.

In 1968 a systematic approach for the development of Greek volleyball was initiated. The famous coach Stefan Roman, who is currently considered to be the volleyball technique founder in Greece, was hired by the Greek Sports Federation in order to further develop this particular sport. A year later, in 1969, Greek national team took part in the Spring Cup organized in Finland. The same year the first developmental academies were created in Athens and Thessaloniki in order to create new talented and skillful players for the national teams.

The year 1970 was an extremely vital year for Greek volleyball due to the fact that volleyball and basketball were separated, upon the efforts of Dr. Theodoros Andreadakou, and two independent Federations were created. The decision for this separation was taken by the General Sports Secretary, K. Aslanidis, and the Hellenic Volleyball Federation was established. From that year and on a radical development of Greek volleyball was initiated. After this foundation, a five-year developmental project was created. Scholarships were provided to volleyball athletes in order to study in Greek universities and local volleyball committees and referees' school were created. Furthermore, mini volleyball teams were founded in order to attract children and students to volleyball and the first indoor gyms were built by the General Sports Secretary of Greece. Following these important events, Greece successfully organized that year's Balkan Championship. For the first time a Greek national team won the Turkish (3-1 sets) and ranked fourth among other participants. Later this year the national team took part in the Pre-Olympic tournament held in Sofia, Bulgaria, however did not manage to make it through to the Olympics. Also, the Greek national students team participated in the World Universiade at Torino, Italy.

1971-1984: Later years

The next few years volleyball development continued rapidly. The first international successes became a reality for the newly established sports federation. The adolescents' national team ranked third at the 1971 Balkan Championship, men's national team ranked third at the 1972 Mediterranean Games and fifth at the Spring cup the same year, the military national team took the first place at the 1973 CISM Championship and the adolescents' national team ranked first at the 1973 Balkan Championship that was organized in Athens.

In 1972 the first women's central Greece championship was organized in Athens, as well as the first Greek national Championship in the city of Kavala. In both competitions, the winner was the female team of Panathinaikos. During the following years (1963-1975) the men's team of Panathinaikos dominated in the national championships and won nine times, while between 1976-1982 the dominant team was that of Olympiakos. In women's championships, the two dominant teams between 1972-1980 were Panathinaikos and ZAKS. In 1982 the first women's A-class national Championship was held and the winner was the team of Panathinaikos.

Some other important events took place in 1980. Men's Greek national team was the gold medalist at the Balkan Championship held in Athens, Greece, and at the Spring Cup (a success which was repeated also in 1981 and 1982). Also Panathinaikos men's team was the silver medalist at the European Cup. In 1981 men's national team participated at the final phase of the European Championship in Berlin, ranking 11th, while two years later (1983) in Berlin performed slightly better, ranking ninth. Finally, in 1984, youth's national team also took part at the final phase of the European Championship held in France and ranked 10th.

1985-1987: Toward the international recognition of Greek volleyball

The year 1985 was a crucial time for the rise of the Greek volleyball in Europe. Initially, women's national team was qualified for the first time at the final phase of the European Championship in Netherlands and took the 12th position (0-15 sets in total). On the other hand, men's national team participated at the 14th edition of the European Championship, held in Netherlands, ranking eighth.

In November of the same year (1985) the former coach of the youth's national team, Thanasis Margaritis, became the head coach of the men's national team, with the assistance of the coach Stefanos Polyzos. This recruitment became official in January 1986. The initial goal set at that time was the participation in the forthcoming World Championship of France in 1986. In order to succeed this goal, Greek national team participated in the 1986 Men's Qualification Tournament, which was held in Athens, Greece (Peace and Friendship stadium of Pireus).

During the first phase of the tournament, Greece was in the same group and competed against the national teams of Bahrain, Canada, Tunisia, Australia and South Korea. In this phase, the Greek team ranked second and was qualified to the semifinals. In the first semifinal was defeated by Cuba, however managed to defeat Canada and take the third place, which provided the ticket for the World Championship participation. This success gave the opportunity to the Greek national team to compete in friendly matches against some of the top-classified national teams of that time, such as West Germany, Netherlands, Italy, ex USSR, Brazil and ex Yugoslavia. The Greek team's results of this historical Spring Cup tournament are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. 1986 Spring Cup results.

DATE	TEAMS	SETS	GAMES
04/04/1986	Greece – Bahrain	3-0	15-3, 15-10, 15-1
05/04/1986	Greece – Canada	2-3	10-15, 15-9, 15-12, 5-15, 14-16
07/04/1986	Greece – Tunisia	3-1	15-7, 15-5, 11-15, 15-7
08/04/1986	Greece – Australia	3-0	15-4, 15-3, 15-0
09/04/1986	Greece – S. Korea	3-0	15-13, 12-4, 12-4
11/09/1986	Cuba – Greece	3-0	15-13, 15-9, 16-1
12/04/1986	Greece – Canada	3-1	15-8, 15-8, 11-15, 15-10

Table 2. The players of the Greek national team in 1986 Spring Cup.

NAME	NUMBER
Lefteris Terzakis	1
Stelios Kazazis	2
Kostas Margaronis	3
Makis Dimitriadis	4
Thanasis Moustakidis	6
Tasos Tentzeris	8
Vaggelis Koutsonikas	10
Giorgos Lykoudis	11
Mihalis Triantafyllidis	12
Dimitris Andreopoulos	13
Sotiris Amarianakis	14
Kostas Gkountakos	15
Dimitris Valsamidis	7
Theodoris Andreadis	5
Thanasis Margaritis	Head Coach
Stefanos Polyzos	Assistant Coach



Figure 5. Peace and Friendship stadium, 12/04/1986: Win and qualification in the 1986 World Championship against Canada.

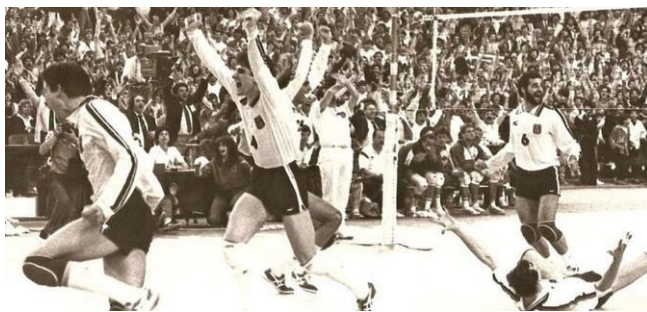


Figure 6. Peace and Friendship stadium, 12/04/1986: Greek players celebrate the qualification in the 1986 World Championship.

In this initial participation team in the World Championship, the Greek national team had to compete against some of the top-level volleyball teams worldwide. In the group that was played in Orleans, France, apart from Greece, there were also Japan, USA and Argentina. Unfortunately, the Greek team did not manage to win a single game and ranked fourth in the group. Consequently, Greece competed in the group, which consisted of the fourth ranking teams of all groups (Taiwan, Egypt and Venezuela). In that group won all matches and took the 13th place in total. The Greek team's results of this World Championship tournament are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. 1986 World Championship results.

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
24/09/1986	Japan – Greece	3-0	15-8, 15-3, 15-6
25/09/1986	USA – Greece	3-0	15-6, 15-7, 15-4
26/09/1986	Argentina – Greece	3-0	15-6, 15-3, 15-6
29/09/1986	Greece – Taiwan	3-0	15-10, 15-11, 15-12
30/09/1986	Greece – Egypt	3-2	11-15, 15-8, 12-15, 15-13, 15-12
01/10/1986	Greece – Venezuela	3-0	15-3, 15-8, 16-14

Table 4. The players of the Greek national team in 1986 World Championship.

NAME	NUMBER
Lefteris Terzakis	1
Stelios Kazazis	2
Kostas Margaronis	3
Makis Dimitriadis	4
Dimitris Gontikas	5
Thanasis Moustakidis	6
Tasos Tentzeris	8
Vaggelis Koutsonikas	10
Giorgos Lykoudis	11
Mihalis Triantafyllidis	12
Dimitris Andreopoulos	13
Kostas Gkountakos	15
Thanasis Margaritis	Head Coach
Stefanos Polyzos	Assistant Coach



Figure 7. France, 1986: Greek national team in the World Championship.

After the success of participating in the World Championship in 1986, new talented players joined the Greek national team, e.g. Giorgos Dragovic, Dimitris Kazazis, Ioannis Fakas, while Sotiris Amarianakis, who did not participate in France, returned. Additionally, Kostas Gountakos was replaced by the experienced player Giannis Nikolaidis. Also, the assistant coach was replaced and instead of Stefanos Polyzos, Kyriakos Pantelias was hired.

In 1986 the Greek national team played 51 international matches during

the preparation for the forthcoming European Championship, resulting in a total of 480 hours of training activities in 160 days. The most important matches during this preparation phase are presented in the following tables.

Table 5. *Hamburg tournament.*

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
27/12/1986	Greece – West Germany	1-3	6-15, 8-15, 15-9, 15-17
28/12/1986	Greece – Poland	0-3	8-15, 9-15, 11-15
29/12/1986	Greece - Finland	0-3	8-15, 11-15, 7-15

Table 6. *Spring Cup – Switzerland (3rd position).*

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
13/04/1987	Greece – Spain	3-1	15-13, 15-8, 13-15, 15-2
14/04/1987	Greece – Austria	3-0	15-2, 15-6, 15-6
15/04/1987	Greece – Finland	3-1	15-7, 9-15, 15-5, 16- 14
17/04/1987	Greece – Portugal	3-0	15-5, 16-14, 15-2
18/04/1987	Germany – Greece	3-1	15-13, 10-15, 15-11, 16-14
19/04/1987	Sweden - Greece	3-0	15-11, 15-9, 15-13

Table 7. Matches against East Germany.

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
30/04/1987	E. Germany - Greece	3-2	15-10, 12-15, 9-15, 15-8, 15-12
01/05/1987	Greece – E. Germany	3-2	15-10, 10-15, 15-13, 11-15, 15-12
02/05/1987	Greece – E. Germany	3-2	9-15, 8-15, 15-4, 15-5, 15-11
03/05/1987	Greece – E. Germany	0-3	7-15, 10-15, 4-15

Table 8. Zagreb (ex Yugoslavia) tournament.

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
08/05/1987	Greece – Bulgaria	3-0	17-15, 15-6, 15-11
09/05/1987	Greece - Yugoslavia	2-3	15-7, 13-15, 15-12, 13-15, 8-15
10/05/1987	Greece - Romania	0-3	2-15, 0-15, 11-15

In order Greece to participate in the finals of the European Championship that were going to take place in Belgium in 1987, Greek national team had to overcome the obstacle of four teams during the preliminary qualification round in Pori, Finland. In that group, Greece succeeded four consecutive wins against all teams and qualified to the European Championship finals, while the second qualified team was Romania.

Table 9. Pori (Finland) qualification's round.

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
21/05/1987	Greece – Finland	3-1	15-9, 8-15, 15-11, 15-10
22/05/1987	Greece – Norway	3-0	15-6, 15-3, 15-2
23/05/1987	Greece – Romania	3-2	7-15, 15-0, 16-14, 15-17, 15-10
24/02/1987	Greece - England	3-0	15-1, 15-3, 15-6

The following friendly matches took place after Greece's qualification to the finals:

Table 10. *Matches against the Netherlands (Peace and Friendship stadium, Piraeus, Greece).*

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
30/07/1987	Greece - Netherlands	3-2	15-5, 8-15, 15-7, 7-15, 15-7
31/07/1987	Greece - Netherlands	1-3	13-15, 14-16, 15-12, 13-15
05/08/1987	Greece - Netherlands	1-3	15-12, 9-15, 3-15, 10-15
06/08/1987	Greece - Netherlands	2-3	6-15, 8-15, 15-4, 15-12, 8-15
07/08/1987	Greece - Netherlands	3-1	15-4, 7-15, 15-8, 15-6

Table 11. *Matches against Sweden (Nyköping, Sweden).*

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
14/08/1987	Sweden – Greece	2-2	No official data
15/08/1987	Sweden – Greece	3-1	15-12, 11-15, 15-11, 16-14
16/08/1987	Sweden – Greece	3-1	13-15, 15-13, 15-11, 16-14
17/08/1987	Sweden - Greece	3-0	15-8, 15-10, 15-7

Table 12. *Matches against Spain (in Tenerife, Spain).*

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
25/08/1987	Greece – Spain	3-0	No official data
26/08/1987	Greece – Spain	3-1	No official data
27/08/1987	Greece - Spain	3-0	No official data
28/08/1987	Greece – Spain	3-2	15-12, 8-15, 11-15, 15-6, 15-8
29/08/1987	Greece - Spain	3-2	16-14, 5-15, 15-5, 9-15, 15-12

Table 13. *Matches against ex Czechoslovakia (Athens, Greece).*

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
11/09/1987	Greece - Czechoslovakia	3-0	15-12, 15-2, 15-11
12/09/1987	Czechoslovakia – Greece	3-0	15-9, 15-4, 15-8
13/09/1987	Czechoslovakia - Greece	3-0	15-10, 15-10, 15-12

The 1987 European Championship of Belgium was conducted in two separate groups of six teams each. Greek national team participated in Genk's group with Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Spain, Belgium and Sweden. Won five out of six games and took the second place (9 points, 13-8 sets in total), which allowed the qualification to the semifinals. The results of that group are presented in the following table:

Table 14. 1987 European Championship results.

DATE	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
25/09/1987	Greece – Czechoslovakia	3-2	13-15, 15-8, 15-6, 4-15, 15-5
26/09/1987	Greece – Bulgaria	3-1	7-15, 15-8, 15-8, 15-8
27/09/1987	Greece – Spain	3-0	15-7, 15-9, 15-12
29/09/1987	Greece – Belgium	3-2	15-7, 10-15, 15-7, 12-15, 15-8
30/09/1987	Sweden – Greece	3-1	15-8, 10-15, 15- 10, 15-12

In the semifinals Greece played against the ex USSR and was defeated easily (3-0 sets). However, at the third/fourth place match, managed to defeat Sweden (3-2 sets) and take the bronze medal!

Table 15. 1987 European Championship results (semifinal and bronze medal match).

DATE	ROUND	TEAMS	MATCH	SETS
11/09/1987	Semifinal	USSR – Greece	3-0	15-5, 15-5, 15-12
13/09/1987	Third/fourth place	Greece – Sweden	3-2	14-16, 15-9, 6- 15, 15-10, 16-14

This huge success of the Greek volleyball boosted its popularity in Greece, however it never became a very popular sport because the same year (1987) Greek's basketball national team won the European Basketball Championship held in Athens, Greece. Greece's head coach Thanasis Margaritis mentioned later on that the conditions during the European Championship were not ideal for the team because they had to live in an elderly nursing home rather than a hotel! Furthermore, the opponents' scouting was not developed at that time and Margaritis with the assistant coach Pantelias were kept awake during the nights in order to analyze the opponents' way of playing. In order to present their findings to the players, they had to use the one and only black and white television available in the nursing home!

The Greek national team during the 1987 European Championship was consisted of the following players:

Table 16. *The players of the Greek national team in 1987 European Championship.*

NAME	NUMBER
Giannis Nikolaidis	1
Stelios Kazazis	2
Kostas Margaronis	3
Makis Dimitriadis	4
Dimitris Kazazis	5
Thanasis Moustakidis	6
Tasos Tentzeris	8
Vaggelis Koutsonikas	10
Dimitris Gontikas	11
Mihalis Triantafyllidis	12
Giorgos Dragovic	13
Sotiris Amarianakis	15
Thanasis Margaritis	Head Coach
Sotiris Pantelias	Assistant Coach



Figure 8. *Belgium, 1987: Greek national team that participated in the European Championship.*



Figure 9. Ghent, 1987: Greek national team in the third place of the European Championship.



Figure 10. Athens, 1987: Greek national team players upon their return to Greece, bearing on the chest the bronze medal.



Figure 11. Ghent, 1987: Bronze medal won by Greece in the European Championship.

Concluding remarks

Greek volleyball was initially established by the Greek YMCA on the aegean shores of west Anatolian peninsula (Asian Turkey) in 1919. The first Greek volleyball coach was a physical education teacher named Athanasios Lefkaditis. The most important teams, both for men and women, were Ethnikos, Panathinaikos, Panellinios and Panionis in Athens and Aris, Iraklis, PAOK and YMCA in Thessaloniki. In 1952 men's Greek national team played the first two international friendly matches against the French national team and in 1960-1961 the first Panhellenic Volleyball Championship took place in Athens and the first champion was the team of Panellinios. Greece joined the FIVB in 1949 and in 1966 the Greek Sports Federation, with the participation of volleyball and basketball, was established. In 1970 volleyball and basketball were separated, upon the efforts of Theodoros Andreadakou, and the Hellenic Volleyball Federation was established. During that time (1970-1975) the foundations of the in-depth diffusion of Greek volleyball were laid. Two crucial years for the international recognition of Greek volleyball were 1986 and 1987, when men's Greek national team participated for the first time at the World Championship and took the bronze medal in the European Championship, respectively. Till that time, the Greek volleyball has faced positive and negative eras, with the last few years been extremely challenging, and its further development has been limited due to several factors.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my Professor, Nikos Bergeles, as well as the National Volleyball Teams’ Friendship Club (hellasvolley.gr) and Thanasis Margaritis, whose contribution and photographic material was valuable in order to complete successfully the History of Volleyball in Greece.